

**Tourism and Hospitality Education in Universiti Malaysia Kelantan: An
Entrepreneurial Approach**

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Case study

Purpose

This study provides an overview of a new tourism and hospitality degree program currently offered by University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK), a new public university in Malaysia and briefly explains the key differences between other similar programs offered by other higher learning institutions in Malaysia.

Design/methodology/approach

The content of the programs will be examined in terms of curricular design, relevant courses and teaching methods. Comparison will be made against selected higher learning institutions that provide the similar programs.

Findings

To highlight what are the strengths and weaknesses of the program offered by UMK against other higher learning institutions in Malaysia and to provide recommendations in strengthening the program.

Originality/value

There are many tourism and hospitality education programs offered by higher learning institution in Malaysia but not many studies are conducted in critically investigating the content of the program and comparing with others.

Text Abstract

The offering of tourism and hospitality education program in Malaysia is growing tremendously. Many higher learning institutions from the public and private education sector offer various tourism and hospitality management program specializing in different areas such as hotel, culinary, tour and travel and event management. The proliferation of these tourism and hospitality management programs creates heavy competition among these institutions in attracting students for the program. However, there are not many studies conducted in examining the content of those programs as well as the strength and weaknesses. Therefore, this paper highlights the new development of tourism and hospitality education program currently offered by the University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) and explain how those programs differ from the other higher learning institutions. As one of the public universities in Malaysia, UMK is focusing on the entrepreneurial education which includes tourism and hospitality as one of the area of specializations. In this paper, the content of the programs will be looked into as well as the teaching approach.

Keywords: Hospitality Education, curricular, tourism and hospitality industry, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry is recognized as one of the major industries Malaysia in providing foreign exchange earnings and giving employment to the people. The latest figure provided by the Tourism Malaysia's website indicates that the number of tourist arrivals to the country is increasing yearly as well as the total tourist receipts (Tourism Malaysia, 2010). For example, for the year 2009, tourism contributed 20.6 million tourist arrivals, an increase of 7.2% compared to the previous year. The latest tourist receipts registered for 2009 was over RM53 billion, an increase of 8% compared to the same period in 2008. This significant economic contribution of the industry to the country has resulted in the government to recognize the fully important of the industry and to make Malaysia one of the largest tourism marketplaces in the region (Nair and Whitelaw, 2008)

In order to cater to increasing employment opportunities and the demand for well competent workforce, the number of tourism and hospitality education program offered by higher learning institutions in Malaysia has increased rapidly. Over the last 30 years, the training and education for tourism and hospitality is carried out by public and private agencies (Goldsmith and Zahari, 1994). It is indicated that the need for training in tourism and hospitality in upgrading the competencies level of workforce to serve the industry is very important. In Malaysia, presently, tourism and hospitality education program is offered by a number of public and private universities, colleges and polytechnics (Table 1). The certification in the form of degrees and diploma are awarded for the students who have successfully completed the program over certain duration of time. Since the first hospitality and tourism training program being introduced by National Productivity Corporation (NPC) in the early 70s (Goldsmith and Zahari 1994) and later pioneered by MARA Institute of Technology or UiTM (School of Hotel and Tourism Management), hospitality and tourism education in Malaysia has undergone through so many changes.

This paper provides some of the issues that are related to the current perspectives of tourism and hospitality education in Malaysia. It will mainly deal with the development of tourism and hospitality program currently offered by the Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan since 2008. This paper introduces the structure of the Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Tourism) with Honors and Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Hospitality) with Honors and briefly explains the objectives of both programs. This paper also mentions the strengths and weaknesses of the program and provides recommendations how to improve the offering of both programs.

Tourism and Hospitality Education

The issues of tourism education have drawn various interests from tourism scholars lately especially in analyzing the effectiveness of the curriculum (Sheldon et al., 2008). In Malaysia, empirical or scholarly research on tourism and hospitality education is relatively new but yet there are certainly many issues that need to be examined such as curriculum development, curriculum contents and the quality of the programs. The tourism and hospitality education in Malaysia is developing at the fast rate with so many public and private high learning institutions are offering such program. The quality of the programs has to be monitored and investigated in order to produce the right kind of graduates with the right kind of mindsets. This can be achieved partly by studying the tourism and hospitality curricular by getting significant input and feedbacks from the various stakeholders.

It is very important that higher education to develop a very comprehensive tourism and hospitality curricula in preparing graduates for the present and the future of the industry (Tribe 2001). Tribe (2002) suggested that tourism and hospitality education must be able to equip students with a more liberal education so that at they can think creatively and innovatively for a widen career opportunities. Based on the identified literature, most of the studies tend to focus on the contents of the tourism and hospitality curriculum which being developed exclusively for developed countries. As rightly pointed out by Jayawardena (2001), the contents of the tourism and hospitality program offered by the

developing countries including Malaysia also need to be critically investigated in order to effectively provide quality education and training in the respective field. According to Inui et al. (2006), tourism education tends to focus on enabling students to find suitable career opportunities in the industry and overlooks the other important part of education; to provide students with a philosophical and sociological foundation of tourism education. Thus, it is suggested that a well balanced of vocational and liberal aspects of tourism education to be taught to the students for producing a well-rounded graduate.

INSTITUTION	YEAR COMMENCED	PROGRAM
UiTM	1996 2004	B. Sc Hotel Management B. Sc Food Service Management B. Sc. Tourism Management
Universiti Utara Malaysia	1999 2003	Bachelor of Tourism Management Bachelor of Hospitality Management
Universiti Putra Malaysia	2002	Elective courses in Hospitality & tourism under the Faculty of Business Administration & Economics) B. Management (hospitality, Tourism & Recreation)
Universiti Malaya	1996/97 2002	2 elective courses in Hotel & Tourism Management under the Faculty of Business & Accountancy B. Business (Hotel & Tourism Management)
Universiti Sains Malaysia	1975	Elective course for the B. Sc. in Housing, Building and Planning under the Faculty of

	2004	Housing, Building & Planning M. Sc. in Tourism Development
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia	1989	Elective course in Tourism Planning for the Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning
	1997	Building and Planning under the Faculty of Built Environment
	1998	
Universiti Malaysia Sabah	1997	Bachelor of Business (Hotel Management)
	2006	Bachelor of Business (Tourism Management)
Universiti Malaysia Kelantan	2007	Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Tourism)
	2008	Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Hospitality)

Table 1 Undergraduate Tourism and Hospitality Education in Public Higher

Education Institutions in Malaysia

Adapted from Bagul and Marzuki (2007)

Many students who graduate from tourism and hospitality program are expected to join the hotel industry, food and beverage, airline and tour agencies. Ironically, even though there is abundant supply of graduates from this program, not many of them are interested to work in the industry. As a result, the hospitality industry has suffered from acute shortage of skill workers. Apparently, according to current research, graduates from these programs prefer to work in other industries such as banking, manufacturing and other service related sectors. The situation where the graduates of the programs who do not wish to enter the industry is not new but yet it needs to be addressed urgently. It has to be studied carefully to look for various reasons that contribute to this predicament. If the problem remains unchecked, eventually it will lead to other serious problems such as the deterioration of quality services, over dependence on foreign labor etc. According to Cooper, Shepherd and Westlake (1996), many of the problems faced by the tourism and hospitality educators are related to the image of the industry itself where most people view that hospitality and tourism program is for low achiever type of students and

therefore may also limit their alternative career options. The hospitality industry is also exposed to many negative perceptions or social stigmas such as prostitution, drinking alcohol, gambling and other sensitive issues that may go against the major religion of Islam which is widely practiced by most of the population in the country (Henderson 2002). There are also other factors that may contribute to this situation such as the salary scheme for people who join the industry is not really well attractive to encourage them to stay longer in the industry. Second, long working hours has resulted in low job satisfaction and therefore lack of motivation.

Therefore, it is very timely for the tourism educators to revise the curriculum to reflect on the current situation where the tourism and hospitality graduates do not want to enter the job market. Other than joining the hospitality industry immediately after completion of the degree program, students should be taught to set up their own business in this field. There are a lot of opportunities for the graduates to become an entrepreneur by establishing businesses in tourism. For example, they can run a small chalet, homestay and involve with food services. In Malaysia, entrepreneurial activities are highly valued by the government especially if the involvement comes from the university graduates. There are a lot of funds and loans provided by the financial institutions to set up small businesses and graduate may apply such assistance through a viable business plan.

Tourism and Hospitality Education at Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business, University Malaysia Kelantan

University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) officially began its operation on 1st July 2007. The philosophy of curriculum studies in UMK is based on entrepreneurship and enterprise education in all the study programmes. In line with this focus, various taglines such as “Entrepreneurship is Our Trust”, “Entrepreneurial University” and “Entrepreneurial Education” are used to promote the philosophy of the university. The Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business is one of the earliest faculty established at the Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). The faculty is established in line with the vision

and mission of the university which emphasizes on entrepreneurship and enterprise education. The faculty offers entrepreneurship and business programs not only to deliver the established knowledge but also inculcate practices of entrepreneurial skills and talent amongst students.

Currently, there are four academic programs offered by the Faculty – the Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Commerce) with Honors, Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Tourism) with Honors, Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Hospitality) with Honors, Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Health Entrepreneurship) with Honors. All the programs are structured in such a way that more elements of entrepreneurship are inculcated across the curriculum. According to the Vice Chancellor Professor Zainai, UMK is the only university in the country which incorporates a minimum of 10% of its course content across the board for all academic programmes covers the establish knowledge of entrepreneurship.

Under the flagship of Entrepreneurship University, the tourism and hospitality program are focusing more on inculcating the entrepreneurial spirit among its students. Students are exposed to real life experiences of relevant practitioner entrepreneurs in the fields by attending an entrepreneurial visit trip once every semester. Entrepreneurial visit or EV is one of the important components of the program to give opportunities for students to visit tourism and hospitality establishments such as hotels and motels, food services and travel agencies. During the visit, students will interact with operators and study how they manage their companies. At the end of their visit, students are required to write a report about the company and to explain how they can apply knowledge in setting up their own business. It is also compulsory for students and academic staff to attend a chairman lecture series (CLS) delivered by the prominent CEO of well established company in the country. The CLS is organized at various established hotels at least one every semester and students are encouraged to ask questions to the selected CEOs. Furthermore, all tourism and hospitality courses are required to invite a promising entrepreneur in the field to share their experiences with the students in class. These exposures will definitely stimulate the learning process among tourism and hospitality students and hopefully will change their mindset from being workers in the field to setting up their own businesses.

Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Tourism) with Honors and Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Hospitality)

Currently, these two programs are being offered under department of tourism and hospitality, faculty of entrepreneurship and business. Students have to complete a minimum of 125 credit hours to graduate from each program and are expected to complete the program within 4 years of study which includes a 4 months practical training at the end of their final year. The structure of both programs (refer to table 1) demonstrate that students are required to register four courses in entrepreneurship to enhance and stimulate their interest in this field. During year 1 and 2, students in these programs are required to complete foundation class in management, business courses and a few entrepreneurship courses. However, the contents of most of the courses for both programs are entrepreneurial in nature where students are given opportunities to explore ideas, develop a business plan in a related field and propose it to the faculty at the end of their final year.

University Core Courses	Credit Hour	University Entrepreneurship Core Courses	Credit Hour
English I	2	Basic Entrepreneurship	3
English II	2	Entrepreneurs's Behavior	3
English for Business Communication	2	Corporate Entrepreneurship	3
Foreign Language I	2	Social Entrepreneurship	3
Foreign Language II	2	Total	12
Foreign Language III	2		
Co- Curriculum I	1		
Co- Curriculum II	1	Program Electives*	Credit Hour
Islamic and Asia Civilization	2	Event Management	3
Ethnic Relationship	2	Sports & Recreation Management	3
Malaysia Nation Development	2	Eco Tourism	3
Critical and Creative Thought	2	Tourism Analysis (new course)	3
Professional Morale and Ethical	2	Cultural and Heritage Tourism	3
Economic Development and Society	2	Tour Guide Course I	3
Total	26	Tour Guide Course II	3
		Total	12
Faculty Core Courses	Credit Hour	Program Core Courses	Credit Hour
Principles of Management	3	HR Management	3
Micro Economic	3	Business Law	3
Macro Economic	3	Principles of Tourism and Hospitality	3
Principles of Accounting	3	Product Planning and Development in Tourism	3
Business Math	3	Consumer Behaviour in Tourism & Hospitality	3
Business Statistic	3	Travel & Tours in Tourism Management	3
Basic IT	3	Issues in Tourism	3
Financial Management	3	Research Method	3
Principles of Marketing	3	Research Project I	2
Operation Management	3	Research Project II	3
Student in Enterprise Prog (SIEP)	2	Internship Program	8
Total	32	Total	37

Table 2: Bachelor of Entrepreneurship (Tourism) - Components of the Program

The aim of these programmes is to produce graduates who are able to apply skills and knowledge of entrepreneurship in their chosen fields. Both programmes also equip graduates with a background in business and entrepreneurship in combination with various courses in tourism and hospitality. Students are expected to be able to identify various business opportunities in tourism and propose ideas through business plan competition which is organised at the end of their final year.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the programmes

The strengths of the both programmes are recognised by combining entrepreneurship education with tourism and hospitality. In Malaysia, UMK is the first university which offer degree in entrepreneurship with a specialization in tourism and hospitality. It can be a niche area for the university to expand and compete with other institutions. With comparison with tourism and hospitality programs in other institutions, it seems that UMK is leading its way by changing the mindset of the students to look as entrepreneurship as a career opportunities especially in tourism and hospitality.

Hospitality and tourism education in UMK is relatively new and there are a lot of areas that need to be improved in terms of curriculum structures and its academic staff. As a new university, there are many constraints in terms of facilities and academic staff recruitment. Due to the budget constraints, both programs lack of state of the art training facilities such as kitchen and restaurants. However, there will be more facilities to be built such as business incubators to encourage students to participate in entrepreneurial activities. Other than that, most of academic staffs consist of junior inexperienced staff recruited immediately after they have completed their Master degree. However, all academic staff tourism and hospitality are required to complete a PhD to progress their career with the university. As for the curriculum structures, it is suggested that more courses in tourism and hospitality are to be included in the components. Other than that students should be exposed with at least one or two courses in tourism and hospitality at the early year of the program and not until their second year so that they have ideas what field they are in.

Conclusion

In conclusion, each hospitality and tourism program offered by the higher learning institutions must have their own strength and uniqueness. In other word, each program has to be different to cater to different students' needs and interests. The new hospitality and tourism program which is currently offered by University Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)

under the entrepreneurship degree is one of the viable options for students to choose. Hopefully, the graduates of this program will not only be able to work in the industry but also will be capable of venturing into tourism and hospitality businesses on their own. This will definitely change the landscape of the state of tourism and hospitality education in the country.

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